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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 001711

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS LAURA SCHEIBE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/11/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [RP](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: PHILIPPINE OUTRAGE OVER AUNG SAN SUU KYI VERDICT

REF: STATE 83598

Classified By: DCM Leslie A. Bassett, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In an August 12 private breakfast with the Ambassador, Philippine Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo expressed outrage over the guilty verdict rendered in the case of detained Burmese pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, while frankly admitting his frustration in searching for a means to influence the behavior of the ruling Burmese junta. On behalf of the Philippine government, Romulo on August 11 released a very strong statement condemning the verdict, characterizing it as "incomprehensible and deplorable," and calling for Suu Kyi's immediate and unconditional release. The statement went on to say that the court's ruling placed into doubt the credibility of any Burmese commitment to hold free and fair elections in 2010. (Complete text of statement below.) Post reached out separately to working-level contacts at the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), where meetings are underway to determine the Philippines' stance on the Malaysian Foreign Minister's call to convene an immediate meeting of ASEAN foreign ministers. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) In his August 12 private discussion with the Ambassador, Foreign Secretary Romulo decried the Burmese court's August 11 guilty verdict against detained pro-democracy advocate Aung San Suu Kyi. Romulo asserted that ASEAN must do more to influence the Burmese regime, notwithstanding the lack of public outrage on the part of many ASEAN members such as Singapore -- whose lethargy he ascribed to their business dealings with Burmese junta members, including banking and health care services. Romulo expressed frustration at the larger question of how to reach the Burmese regime, which he characterized as seemingly immune from international pressure. He added that the upcoming August 14 visit to the Philippines of the Thai prime minister might offer an opportunity for further useful discussions on Burma.

¶3. (C) Post separately raised the issue of Suu Kyi's conviction and continued detention with DFA's Office of ASEAN Affairs. Special Assistant Brian Baguio said the Philippine government will meet later today to decide whether to support the proposal by the Malaysian Foreign Minister Y. B. Datuk Anifah bin Haji Aman to hold an urgent meeting of ASEAN foreign ministers to discuss Suu Kyi's conviction. Mr. Baguio added that the Philippines shares the U.S. government's deep disappointment over the verdict and the continued detention of Aung San Suu Kyi by the Burmese junta.

¶4. (SBU) Full text of Philippine statement follows:

Begin Text:

Press release  
The Department of Foreign Affairs

Manila, Philippines

Statement of Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto G. Romulo on  
the Verdict on Aung San Suu Kyi  
11 August 2009

The Philippine Government finds the decision by a court in Myanmar imposing on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi an 18-month sentence under house arrest as incomprehensible and deplorable. The Philippines urges the Government of Myanmar to reconsider its decision and renews its call for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi,s immediate and unconditional release.

This new ruling places doubt on the commitment of the Government of Myanmar to hold free, fair, participatory, transparent, and credible elections in 2010.

This development is a step backward and has once again sidetracked Myanmar,s efforts to carry out its own "Roadmap for Democracy": its avowed program of releasing political detainees, including unfettering the National League for Democracy, and allowing its unconditional participation in free elections.

The Philippines echoes the statements made by United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon that there can be no way forward in Myanmar,s quest for political, economic, and social progress without respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Philippines has a deep friendship with the people of Myanmar, and as conveyed earlier by President Gloria

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Macapagal Arroyo to Prime Minister Thein Sein, has only their welfare at heart.

End Text.  
KENNEY